

CLAIMS

1. A shared central office voice mail system for use with private telephone switches, the system comprising a central voice mail unit connected to a central office; and a plurality of interfaces each coupled to one of a plurality of private telephone switches which are each connected to a central office, each of said interfaces also being connected to said central voice mail unit.
2. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 1 and wherein each of said plurality of interfaces is connected to an extension connection of a private telephone switch.
3. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 2 and wherein each of said plurality of interfaces is also connected via a control connection to said private telephone switch.
4. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 1 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is directly connected to said central voice mail unit via at least one dedicated line.
5. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 1 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is connected to said central voice mail unit via said central office and at least one dedicated line.
6. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 1 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is directly connected to said central voice mail unit via said central office and at least one telephone line.
7. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 1 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is incorporated in a private telephone switch.

8. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 1 and also comprising at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches for providing unified messaging.
9. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 2 and also comprising at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches for providing unified messaging.
10. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 3 and also comprising at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches for providing unified messaging.
11. A shared central office voice mail system according to any of the preceding claims and wherein said PBX and said public voice mail interface are connected to first and second separate central offices.
12. A shared central office voice mail system according to claim 11 and wherein said second central office is a cellular central office.
13. A telephone network having a shared central office voice mail capability comprising:
a plurality of private telephone switches connected to the central office by telephone lines a central voice mail unit connected to a central office; and
a plurality of interfaces each coupled to one of said plurality of private telephone switches which are each connected to a central office, each of said interfaces also being connected to said central voice mail unit.
14. A telephone network according to claim 13 and wherein each of said plurality of interfaces is connected to an extension connection of a private telephone switch.
15. A telephone network according to claim 14 and wherein each of said plurality of interfaces is also connected via a control connection to said private telephone switch 14.

16. A telephone network according to claim 13 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is directly connected to said central voice mail unit via at least one dedicated line.
17. A telephone network according to claim 13 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is connected to said central voice mail unit via said central office and at least one dedicated line.
18. A telephone network according to claim 13 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is directly connected to said central voice mail unit via said central office and at least one telephone line.
19. A telephone network according to claim 13 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is incorporated in a private telephone switch.
20. A telephone network according to claim 13 and also comprising at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches for providing unified messaging.
21. A telephone network according to claim 14 and also comprising at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches for providing unified messaging.
22. A telephone network according to claim 15 and also comprising at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches for providing unified messaging.
23. A telephone network according to any of the preceding claims 13 - 22 and wherein said PBX and said public voice mail interface are connected to first and second separate central offices.
24. A telephone network according to claim 23 and wherein said second central office is a cellular central office.

25. A shared central office voice mail method for use with private telephone switches, the method comprising connecting a central voice mail unit to a central office; and coupling a plurality of interfaces each to one of a plurality of private telephone switches which are each connected to a central office, each of said interfaces also being connected to said central voice mail unit.
26. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 25 and wherein each of said plurality of interfaces is connected to an extension connection of a private telephone switch.
27. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 26 and wherein each of said plurality of interfaces is also connected via a control connection to said private telephone switch.
28. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 26 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is directly connected to said central voice mail unit via at least one dedicated line.
29. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 25 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is connected to said central voice mail unit via said central office and at least one dedicated line.
30. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 25 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is directly connected to said central voice mail unit via said central office and at least one telephone line.
31. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 25 and wherein at least one of said interfaces is incorporated in a private telephone switch.

32. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 25 and also comprising providing unified messaging by means of at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches.
33. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 26 and also comprising providing unified messaging by means of at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches.
34. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 27 and also comprising providing unified messaging by means of at least one computer system cooperating with at least one of said private telephone switches.
35. A shared central office voice mail method according to any of the preceding claims 25 - 34 and wherein said PBX and said public voice mail interface are connected to first and second separate central offices.
36. A shared central office voice mail method according to claim 35 and wherein said second central office is a cellular central office.
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